

VZCZCXYZ0000
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #1352 1431532
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 231532Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2552
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEAHLG/HQ DHS WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 001352

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DS/IP/WHA
DS/IP/ITA
DS/IP/OPO
DSS/DS/OSAC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10 YEARS
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [ES](#) [ASEC](#)
SUBJECT: REDUCING THE MURDER RATE COMPLICATED BY POLITICS

REF: A. SANSALVADOR 00418

[1](#)B. SANSALVADOR 00712

[1](#)C. SANSALVADOR 01193

Classified By: DCM Michael Butler for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The citizens of El Salvador are outraged by numerous murders occurring daily in this country. Police Director Avila is trying to professionalize his police force, but he lacks sufficient manpower and equipment. Yesterday, President Saca announced that his administration will seek additional funding for the police, principally to reduce the murder rate. Unfortunately, ARENA needs the support of the FMLN to raise sufficient funds. It remains to be seen if the old adversaries can cut a deal. If not, the daily homicides will continue unabated. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The daily murder rate in El Salvador is beginning to border on the incredible. Local newspapers have begun to report homicides in the number of hours in which they occur, e.g., "Eight homicides in six hours". As of May 1, 1,143 individuals have been murdered in calendar year 2006 -- 55 more than last year over the same period. Last week, citizens marched in the streets demanding an end to the violence. Despite positive steps taken by the police, the general public is outraged by the lack of public security.

[1](#)3. (C) Although hindered fiscally, President Saca responded to the public outcry by appointing Rodrigo Avila as Police Director (Reftel A). Since resuming command of the police in January, Avila has fired bad cops, promoted good ones, and improved morale by using his public persona to promote the police in the media. Unfortunately, these positive steps towards greater professionalism have had little impact in the short run. In private, Avila concedes that he presently cannot provide adequate public security without more manpower and greater resources. He has publicly requested an infusion of US\$50 to \$60 million for police operations and equipment.

[1](#)4. (C) On May 15, President Saca announced that his administration will seek additional funding for the police, principally to reduce the murder rate. Saca did not mention how much he will ask for, nor when he will make the request. Rather, he coyly noted that increased funding depends on "the financial capacity of the State." The remark was clearly a nod towards the FMLN, who after recent national elections, now have the capacity to block the two-thirds supermajority legislation required to fund Avila's request. (Reftel B and C). (Note: The most likely method of raising US\$60 million is by issuing bonds or reprogramming IFI loans. The

Salvadoran Constitution requires a legislative two-thirds supermajority to authorize the assumption of debt. End Note.)).

15. (C) COMMENT: The Saca administration is clearly feeling the heat from the public outrage on this issue. In order to fund crime legislation that could achieve an appreciable reduction in the daily murder rate, the administration is faced with the unsavory task of negotiating with the FMLN. Unfortunately, it remains to be seen if the bitter adversaries can cut a deal. If not, El Salvador is sure to widen its lead over Colombia in the race to have the highest murder rate in the Western Hemisphere. (Reftel D). Post will keep the Department informed of the administration's efforts to achieve meaningful crime legislation and adequate funding for the police.
Butler